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In spite of the current economic challenges in Ire-
land, it would be very short-sighted to shortchange
investment in childhood health, according to lead-
ing US health economist, Professor James Smith.

“Some lessons are forever and our economic re-
search findings show that in Ireland, Great Britain
and the US, investments in the lives of children,
and, in particular, their physi-
cal and mental health, have
enormous economic returns
that help determine a
country’s future,” said
Professor Smith from
the RAND Corporation
in the United States
who was in Dublin
to receive the UCD
Ulysses Medal.

“Our research shows
that poor childhood health
adversely affects all key adult
economic outcomes including: education, work, income and marriage. It is
also clear that the psychological dimensions associated with poor childhood
health appear more central than the physical health dimensions.”

The award is in recognition of Professor James Smith’s global contribution to
the study and understanding of health economics. The medal is the highest
honour that University College Dublin can bestow.

“With a career spanning more than 30 years, Professor James Smith is one
of the most cited and published health economists in the world,” said Dr
Hugh Brady, President of University College Dublin. “His research has had
considerable impact on policymakers and influenced their decisions
regarding planning for future generations.”

Professor Smith holds the Chair in Labor Markets and Demographic Studies at the RAND Corporation and is a two time recipient of a MERIT award, the highest honour bestowed by the National Institute of Ageing in the United States. The health research stream at Geary actively collaborates with Professor Smith and the wider RAND Corporation on a number of projects on the behavioural aspects of health and welfare. The RAND Corporation is a non-profit institution that helps improve policy and decision making through research and analysis. For more than 60 years, the RAND Corporation has pursued its non-profit mission by conducting research on important and complicated problems.

“It is a great honour to be among the very distinguished scientists and artists who have received the Ulysses Medal from University College Dublin,” said Professor James Smith who received the award at University College Dublin on 15 October 2009. “An award from a leading Irish university means so much to me personally, particularly because both of my parents were born in Ireland - in Sligo and Mayo - but had to emigrate more than 80 years ago because of hard times.”

Economic Recovery Dublin Economics Workshop on the Irish economy

The Dublin Economics Workshop, in conjunction with the UCD Geary Institute, hosted a conference on the Irish Economic Recovery on 2 November 2009. Speakers included Professor David Blanchflower of Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, US; Professor Colm Harmon of UCD Geary Institute; Professor Colm McCarthy, UCD Economics and author of the ‘An Bord Snip Nua’ report; Professor John McHale of NUIG; Professor Philip Lane of TCD and Professor John FitzGerald of the ESRI.

Professor Blanchflower, who advised the Bank of England’s Monetary Committee in 2007, warned that Ireland could repeat the mistakes of the Great Depression if huge cuts in public spending were made too quickly. ‘Moves to cut public spending or public sector wages or employment deep in a recession are a mistake and may turn a recession into a depression, he told delegates. He also noted that solving youth unemployment was the most crucial challenge facing government if we are to avoid the phenomenon of a ‘lost generation’.

Launch of New Era Evaluation Report

Disadvantaged students who enter third-level on special support schemes are more likely to complete their university degree than similarly disadvantaged students studying outside of the scheme, according to a new report.



The report which evaluates the impact of the UCD New ERA Initiative, aimed at widening participation at University College Dublin, also shows that

participation in this type of access and support scheme also increases the chances of disadvantaged students scoring higher grades.

“A New ERA student is between 10% and 15% more likely to graduate than a similarly disadvantaged student who was unable to participate in the scheme,” says Dr Kevin Denny from the UCD School of Economics and the UCD Geary Institute, one of the authors of the report.

More than 500 students have graduated from University College Dublin through the New ERA Initiative since it was first established in 1997, and it currently supports 400 students.

There are 36 schools linked to the initiative including: St John’s College De La Salle, Ballyfermot; Collinstown Park Community College, Clondalkin; and Jobstown Community College, Tallaght.

“Our findings suggest that the new national Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) scheme, which allows students attending non-DEIS schools to participate in access schemes at universities, will lead to more disadvantaged students scoring higher grades and completing their studies at third level,” says Denny.

According to the report published on 03 December 2009, equality issues may help drive the efforts to encourage disadvantaged students to attend third level, but wider economic considerations are just as important.



“For our society to prosper, it is essential that the skills and talents of disadvantaged young people are not wasted, just as a firm needs to ensure that its resources are used to the fullest extent,” explains Denny.

A simple lack of money and an absence of role models are among the traditional barriers to access to third level education in Ireland. However, the single most influential factor in the progression to third level is the educational attainment of one's father.

“The findings of this report clearly show that if we can encourage disadvantaged students to attend third level, and provide them with the right supports, they will succeed,” says Denny. “If we curtail these initiatives due to the current financial climate, we will lose out on the future economic benefits.”

Education is one of the principal influences on life outcomes. It is an important determinant of a person's income, where they live, and how they participate in society. It can also affect how people bring up their children and how they manage their own health.

This report was funded under the Higher Education Authority's Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF).

UCD Geary Institute soars in rankings of university economics groups

The UCD Geary Institute has once again been positioned highly in the latest rankings of university economics groups. The rankings from the Research Papers in Economics database (RePEc), places the Geary Institute at number one in Ireland and globally at 9 (of 124) of Economics Think Tanks.

RePEc (www.repec.org) is a collaborative effort of hundreds of volunteers in 63 countries to enhance the dissemination of research in economics. The RePEc IDEAs rankings draws from various ranking methods of research in Economics and related fields. The analysis is based on data gathered with the RePEc project, in which publishers self-index their publications and authors create online profiles from the indexed works. Citation analysis is performed by the CitEc project, abstract views and paper downloads are counted by the LogEc project, and the various rankings are then established.

Geary Institute and Harris School Masterclass

In a unique collaborative initiative, UCD Geary Institute and the Harris School of Public Policy Studies at the University of Chicago have joined forces to offer professional master classes in public policy analysis. The programme is designed to provide senior civil and public servants with the skills to apply economic perspectives and analytical tools to the formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policy.

Training courses cover a range of policy related tools based topics including:

- Survey Design & Administration
- Program Evaluation
- Statistical Analysis of Public Policy
- Cost Benefit Analysis
- Economic Theory for Policy Analysis
- Analyzing and Communicating Policy

The programme builds on the success of existing research collaboration between the two institutes in the field of Human Development and Public Policy.

This research, supported by Atlantic Philanthropies and The Children's Initiative, a project of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, brings together the world's leading experts on early childhood development to identify the best ways to invest in children in order to realise the largest possible gain for them and society. Key to the success of this research is the involvement of Nobel laureate Professor James Heckman of the University of Chicago and Professor of Science and Society at UCD.

For further information about enrolment on the programme, please email geary@ucd.ie or contact Susan Butler at (01) 7164610.

Geary Institute Working Papers and other Publications

The Institute publishes a range of outputs such as Working Papers which represent work in progress by researchers associated with the Institute, Podcasts of seminars and events at the Institute, Policy Briefings which provide synopses of major literatures, published outputs by researchers, and more informal research links and findings through our blogs. The full range of output is available at www.ucd.ie/geary/publications

The following is a list of the latest Working papers for 2010:

Geary WP2010/21

Money, Mentoring and Making Friends: The Impact of a Multi-dimensional Access Program on Student Performance - Kevin Denny, Orla Doyle, Patricia O'Reilly, Vincent O'Sullivan

Geary WP2010/20

The Causal Effect of Breastfeeding on Children's Cognitive Development: A Quasi-Experimental Design - Orla Doyle, Kevin Denny

Geary WP2010/19

In Praise of Ambidexterity: How a Continuum of Handedness Predicts Social Adjustment - Kevin Denny, Wen Zhang

Geary WP2010/18

The Role of Social Institutions in Inter-Generational Mobility - Brian Nolan, Gosta Esping-Andersen, Christopher T. Whelan, Bertrand Maitre, Sander Wagner

Geary WP2010/17

Promoting the Well-Being of Immigrant Youth - Brian Nolan

Geary WP2010/16

Earning Inequality, Institutions and the Macroeconomy - What Can We Learn from Ireland's Boom Years? - Bertrand Maitre, Brian Nolan and Sarah Voitchovsky

Geary WP2010/15

Political Disagreement and Delegation in a Multi-Level Governance Setting - Annemarije Oosterwaal, Diane Payne, René Torenvlied



New Website

The new Geary Institute website (www.ucd.ie/geary) went live in February 2010. The site plays an important part in our research dissemination and contains detailed information on all ongoing research, grouped under four headings - health, education, labour markets and institutions and behaviour. In addition, the website incorporates a comprehensive Google calendar of events, featured research snapshots, enhanced registration for updates; selected podcasts and blog feeds. For updates via Twitter see <http://twitter.com/ucdgearyinst>.



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HEA

Higher Education Authority
An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas



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